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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR U/S OTERO'S VISIT TO INDIA

1. (SBU) Under Secretary Otero:

Mission India warmly welcomes you to New Delhi to relaunch the Global Issues Forum (GIF) in the run-up to Prime Minister Singh's November 22-26 state visit to Washington. The Embassy has worked hard to make progress across all five pillars and 18 sub-dialogues of the U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue, since the Secretary's July visit. The Global Issues Forum dialogue provides an excellent mechanism to set the course for our two nations to partner to overcome today's global challenges in the region and beyond. The GIF will be a three-hour long discussion on economic and social development, environment and natural resources, water management and food security, and necessary follow-on action.

This message seeks to highlight the Strategic Dialogues and PM Singh visit deliverables involving global issues, flags other issues you may wish to raise, and outlines the activities of relevant ministries.

Energy and Climate Change

1.2. (SBU) We envisage the signature deliverable of PM Singh's November state visit will be the Clean Energy Technology Partnership, which supports Indian efforts to become a model of sustainable growth for the 21st century. The Clean Energy Technology Partnership would focus on clean energy and technological innovation. The USG is exploring the possibility of establishing a USD 100 million Green Fund to provide loan guarantees and use other creative financing mechanisms for new technology and innovative projects. We are exploring potential funding sources for the USG contribution of USD 25 million to the fund.

Education and Development: Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative

1.3. (SBU) The GOI has already agreed to increase its contribution to the Fulbright-Nehru program by USD 1 million to match an increase in U.S. funding. We welcome OES agreement to award USD 5 million from the PL480 rupee funds to the Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative. The GOI is also seeking matching funds for this program, which will increase university linkages and junior faculty development exchanges between U.S. and Indian universities, with a focus on science and technology. In addition to higher education, we have discussed collaboration on basic education, focusing on a conference promoting teaching among young Indians. The GOI is committed to education reform, including legislation permitting the entry of foreign educational providers into the Indian market.

Science, Technology, Health and Innovation: Global Disease Detection (GDD) Program

14. (SBU) The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is reviewing the draft GDD agreement, which would help India respond to international health regulations and develop its global capacity for disease detection. The GOI is also working on clearing the draft GDD agreement through its Health Ministry, and hopes it will be ready for signature when PM Singh visits Washington.

Women's Empowerment Dialogue

15. (SBU) The Women's Empowerment Dialogue (WED) provides opportunities to share best practices and partner on relevant initiatives. Female feticide, trafficking for commercial sex work, domestic violence, and dowry deaths continue to affect countless India women. The new government has made several promises regarding women's political empowerment including raising "reservations" for women in village councils (panchayats) and municipalities and is planning to introduce legislation mandating a 50 percent "reservation" for women in Parliament. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Verreer is visiting India next week to begin discussions with the GOI on the WED.

Food Security & Agriculture Dialogue

16. (SBU) The Agriculture Dialogue seeks to increase bilateral cooperation to maximize opportunities for food security, rural poverty alleviation, and farmer income generation. The GOI views food security as primarily a domestic challenge of

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self-sufficiency in basic commodities. High food prices have been a major issue in past elections and could become a political threat for the current UPA government. We are working to identify tangible outcomes on food security for the PM's visit.

Trafficking in Persons

17. (SBU) India has been placed on the Tier 2 Watch List for six consecutive years, primarily because it has not been able to demonstrate sufficient progress in its anti-TIP law enforcement efforts. If India is on the Tier 2 Watch List in the 2010 TIP Report, it will automatically be downgraded to Tier 3, which not only could result in sanctions against India but would have adverse effects on the entire relationship. The GOI views our G/TIP Report as flawed and as not sufficiently appreciative of the government's anti-TIP efforts within the Indian context in which a top-down, centrally driven approach to a problem is not feasible in heterogeneous, federal, and democratic India. We should explore ways to partner with India on the trafficking challenge. The Global Issues Forum provides a mechanism in which we can work with the GOI to help India become a regional leader in anti-TIP efforts and efforts to protect migrant workers.

Environmental Protection

18. (SBU) Our growing partnership with India in environmental stewardship focuses on developing science-based best management practices for environmental governance and conservation such as introducing appropriate management tools for wildlife conservation, wildlife crime enforcement, management of hazardous materials including mercury, and Environmental Impact Assessment management. India is home to the largest range for the Bengal tiger and also home to one of the few mass nesting sites of the Olive Ridley turtle. Although a member of the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT) and the South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), India has not taken an active role. We

would like India to take a leadership role as the center of biodiversity in the region, and would like to participate in regional capacity building exercises designed to reduce cross-border wildlife trafficking under SAWEN.

UN Human Rights Council

¶9. (SBU) The GOI shares our concerns with the Defamation of Religions resolution in the UN Human Rights Council. India also finds the resolution objectionable because it believes it singles out Islam and may equate race with religion. However, the GOI is likely to abstain rather than vote against such a resolution. It is not yet clear whether India will introduce its Tolerance and Pluralism resolution this year. India is likely to abstain from voting on Burma and DPRK Human Rights resolutions, and any decision regarding Iran will be formulated at the highest levels. On the other hand, the GOI is supportive of the resolution on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and is interested in passing a resolution on the Rights of the Child.

Domestic Politics

¶10. (SBU) The strong performance by the Congress Party and its United Progressive Alliance (UPA) allies in India's springtime national elections has provided the Congress Party with a mandate to govern, after years of battling leftist and regional coalition "partners" over issues including a closer relationship with the United States and economic liberalization. Congress Party leaders attribute its strong showing in the elections to the close attention it paid to the rural sector during the previous government. Accordingly, the UPA's budget focuses most new spending on a rural employment program and rural infrastructure. India's only other national party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has been plagued by internal bickering since its stunning defeat in the national elections.

Aspirations but Roadblocks

¶11. (SBU) India is a regional power that aspires to become a global player. Although the Congress Party's victory set the stage for bolder moves on its foreign policy agenda,

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significant challenges remain. India's sluggish bureaucracy is stove piped and suffers from a lack of capacity and flexibility in every sector. Many senior officials who entered government service during the Cold War era still cling to "non-aligned" shibboleths of the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) sees itself as the primary interlocutor with foreigners and often hinders other ministries from directly engaging with their foreign counterparts. The extreme level of domestic poverty also stands in stark contrast to India's global ambitions. While India's poverty levels have fallen in the past decade as the economy has grown, hundreds of millions of Indians continue to subsist on less than USD 2 dollars a day. India is home to the third-largest number of people living with HIV/AIDS and one-fourth of the world's tuberculosis cases. It is one of four nations in which polio still exists.

Meet the Ministries

¶12. (SBU) Established in 2006, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) formulates policies and coordinates the efforts of the GOI and NGOs working in the field of women and children development. Although the MWCD serves as the GOI's coordinator for anti-trafficking policies and programs, its ability to enhance interagency coordination across the bureaucracy remains weak since several other ministries--i.e., the Home Affairs Ministry and the Law

Ministry-- possess more power. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is responsible for state-center relations, border management, and internal security. Protecting India from terrorist attacks has increasingly taken more of the ministry's time. Although law enforcement is a state responsibility, MHA has can give states guidance on law-and-order issues. The Ministry of Environment and Forests focuses on the conservation of India's natural resources. It also serves as India's nodal agency for climate change and its activist head, Minister Jairam Ramesh, has influenced India's negotiating position in the run-up to the Copenhagen climate talks.

India's Development Assistance Abroad

¶13. (SBU) India has pledged USD 1.3 billion in assistance over ten years to Afghanistan in infrastructure projects, humanitarian assistance, education/capacity development, and small/community based development projects (funding 100 small projects). India is the largest contributor of foreign assistance to Nepal. The GOI has pledged USD 137.5 million to fund a road development project in Nepal. India also plans to fund a police academy, integrated checkpoints along the India-Nepal border, and an upgraded rail link with Nepal.

India's foreign assistance to Sri Lanka funds development projects for education, health, and infrastructure. In the wake of the LTTE's defeat, the GOI has funded demining efforts, donated food aid, and provided over USD 100 million to rehabilitate war victims in Sri Lanka's northern and eastern areas.

Your Meetings and Events

¶14. (SBU) The GOI is looking forward to the GIF. MEA has told us that most, if not all, of the senior officials we have requested will be available to meet with you:

Environment and Forests Minister Ramesh, Women and Child Development Minister Tirath, Foreign Secretary Rao, Home Affairs Secretary Pillai, and Environment and Forests Secretary Sharma.

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